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ABSTRACT

This paper reports the findings of a 1975 survey of Louisiana school superintendents that was intended to develop a data profile of the typical Louisiana superintendent. Fifty-eight of the 66 Louisiana superintendents completed and returned the survey questionnaire. Survey responses are discussed and compared with data from a 1969 national survey of superintendents conducted by the American Association of School Administrators, a 1968 Louisiana study, a 1969 Mississippi study, and two Arkansas studies conducted in 1971 and 1973. The appendix presents an item-by-item report of responses to the 1975 survey questionnaire and summarizes data on college degrees held by Louisiana superintendents. (JG)

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THE LOUISIANA PUBLIC SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT: 1975

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The Bureau of Educational Materials and Research of the College of Education at Louisiana State University surveyed the 66 public school superintendents of Louisiana in the fall of 1975 in order to develop a data profile. Fifty-eight questionnaires (88%) were completed and returned.

The data provide a composite picture of the Louisiana public school superintendent. The "typical" superintendent is male, is approximately fifty years of age, is married, and has three children. He attended public elementary and secondary schools rather than private or parochial schools. He earned a bachelor's and a master's degree from a state university in Louisiana. Most frequently his undergraduate certification was in the area or areas of social studies, science, or health, physical education, and recreation. He taught in public schools eight years before assuming an administrative or supervisory position. His first administrative position was a principalship. His first appointment to a superintendency came approximately twenty-one years after entry into an educational career, and he has spent an average of 4.7 years in his present superintendency. Twenty-four superintendents (36%) have been in their present office two years or less. Only seven have served ten or more years. The median of his years of service is four years. He reported that his average annual salary is $24,310.34 (with a median wage of $25,000). His central office staff includes an average of 11.6 certificated people, and there is an average of nineteen principals in his system. Active professionally, typically he holds memberships in the Louisiana Teachers' Association (LTA), Louisiana Association of School Superintendents (LASA), and the American

Association of School Administrators (AASA). Problem areas in the superintendent's work that demand the greatest amount of his time are general administration, public relations, personnel, student problems, and finances. The superintendent sees the main problems facing education in Louisiana today as lack of money and loss of public confidence and support.

How does this "typical" Louisiana superintendent of 1975 compare with the national picture of the typical superintendent? Every ten years the AASA conducts a national study on the status of the superintendency; the latest study was completed in 1969-70 and published in 1971. Comparison of the data from the 1971 AASA study (3) with the findings of this study reveals that the Louisiana superintendent is slightly older (median age of 50 years as compared to the national median age of 48 years; mean age of 51.21 years compared to the national mean age of 48.5 years) and entered the superintendency with more years of professional educational experience than did the national superintendent. In addition, the Louisiana superintendent had more classroom teaching experience (mean of 8.1 years as compared to the national mean of 6.4; median of 7 years as compared to the national median of 5.0). Their undergraduate majors were approximately the same: science, social studies, or physical education at the secondary level. The Louisianian has had fewer years of experience as a superintendent (mean 4.7 years as compared to the national mean of 11.2; median number of 4 years as compared to the national median of 9.0). The Louisiana superintendent exceeds the national average in master's degrees (100% as compared to 97.9% nationally) but falls behind in the number of earned doctorate degrees (13.8% as compared to the national figure of 29.2%).

Both men are active in professional organizations, but the type of organizations to which they belong differs somewhat. Louisiana superintendents reported 100% membership in the Louisiana Teachers' Association but only 5% hold membership in the National Education Association; 64% of the national superintendents belong to the National Education Association. One-half of the Louisiana superintendents belong to the American Association of School Administrators as compared to 77% of the national superintendents. Memberships in other professional organizations are scattered for both groups. The overwhelming ratio of men to women in the position is the same for both groups. While all of the Louisiana superintendents remain within the state and only 2% have assumed a superintendency in another parish within the state, 92% of the national superintendents remain in one state. Regarding issues, both groups seem to react more to local concerns rather than to prevailing national issues. Also, both regard finances as their primary concern. Work schedules for the Louisiana and national superintendents bear a striking resemblance; both feel they have insufficient time to attend to the many demands of their position.

Another comparison may be made on the basis of a profile of the Louisiana superintendent done in 1968 by Musemeche (4). The typical career line of the 1968 superintendent saw him progress from high school teacher and coach to principal, then on to supervisor or assistant superintendent before assuming a superintendency. The path of upward mobility to the superintendency remains much the same today. Fewer of the Louisiana superintendents in 1968 had their master's degree, 96.4% as compared with 100% at present. In 1968 the median salary for Louisiana superintendents was below the national median for school districts of comparable size.

Membership in the Louisiana Teachers' Association "then" and "now" was 100%. While membership in the Louisiana School Superintendents Association has risen considerably (32.8% in 1968; 95% in 1975), membership in the American Association of School Administrators has fallen from 80% in 1968 to [illegible]% in 1975.

The data from the Bureau's 1975 survey also compare favorably with a 1971 study (1) and a 1973 study (6), both concerning Arkansas public school superintendents, and with another regional study (5) made at Mississippi in 1969. Except for the Mississippi study, the data from the studies indicate that the Louisiana superintendent is generally two to three years older than the average superintendent. Other characteristics are similar in the other studies. For further comparisons the reader is directed to a 1927 study (2) of Louisiana public school superintendents in a master's thesis by Leonard Kilgore.

CONCLUSIONS

The typical career line of the Louisiana public school superintendent and those in other areas progresses from classroom teacher and coach at the secondary level, to a principalship, and then to a supervisory position before entrance into the superintendency. Professional preparation includes a trend toward more master's degrees and an increasing trend toward more earned doctoral degrees. While the Louisiana group is active professionally, the decrease in AASA membership in Louisiana possibly could be because of the recent, large dues increase by AASA. While the trend nationwide is toward assuming the superintendency at a younger age, this is not yet reflected in the profile of the Louisiana superintendent. Many of the things the Louisiana superintendent sees as problems are reactions

to local concerns, although the other studies reveal that certain concerns are shared by superintendents in general. Since 24 superintendents had served only two years or less and since only seven had served ten years or more, there seems to be a frequent turnover in the Louisiana public school superintnedcy. Because they tend to become superintendents within a given system and toward the latter part of their careers, neither Louisiana nor other superintendents would be considered highly mobile.

APPENDIX 1

QUESTIONNAIRE: PUBLIC SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS OF LOUISIANA

(September 4, 1975)

The following portion of the report is devoted to an item-by-item presentation of the Louisiana superintendents' responses to the Bureau's questionnaire. Unless otherwise stated, the data are based on fifty-eight respondents. The number not responding is given for each question; the symbol "NR" is used to indicate the number who did not respond (No Response) to that particular item. The verbal responses to the two open-ended questions at the end of the questionnaire were categorized into broad areas for tabulation.

1. Sex: Male: 100% Female: 0.0% NR: 0
2. Have you been a Superintendent in any other parish in Louisiana?
   No: 98.1% Yes: 1.9% NR: 5
3. Total years of service as a Superintendent, to date:
   Mean: 4.7 Median: 4 NR: 0

4. Areas of teacher certification (in addition to educational administration and supervision):

Agriculture:	8.7%
Business:	6.9%
Driver's Education:	3.4%
Elementary:	12.1%
English:	24.1%
French:	6.9%
Guidance:	15.6%
Health, Physical Education and Recreation:	41.4%
History:	5.2%
Industrial and Vocational Education:	3.4%
Latin:	3.4%
Math:	24.1%
Science:	43.1%
Social Studies:	24.1%

5. Total years of classroom teaching experience:

Mean: 8.1 Median: 7 NR: 1

6. Total years of assistant principalship experience:

Mean: 0.7 Median: 0 NR: 4

7. Total years of principalship experience:

Mean: 7.5 Median: 7 NR: 3

8. Total years of supervisory experience:

Mean: 5.0 Median: 3 NR: 1

9. Have you ever been a police juror?

No: 100% Yes: 0.0% NR: 0

10. Have you ever been a parish school board member?

No: 100% Yes: 0.0% NR: 2

11. Has any of your public school experience been out-of-state?

No: 91.4% Yes: 8.6% NR: 0

12. Has any of your teaching or administrative experience been in a non-public school?

No: 89.7% Yes: 10.3% NR: 0

(Please explain): Parochial -- Elementary: 8.7%
-- High School: 1.7%

13. Have you ever been a member of the State Legislature?

No: 96.6% Yes: 3.4% NR: 0

14. Bachelor's Degree: 100% (20% from LSU)
Master's Degree: 100% (50% from LSU)
Doctoral Degree: 13.8% (0% from LSU)

(Appendix 2 lists superintendents' degrees, year received, and colleges attended.)

15. Are you married?

Yes: 98.3% No: 1.7% NR: 0

Children?

Yes: 96.5% No: 3.5% NR: 1

16. Your age:

Mean: 51.2 Median: 50 High: 66 Low: 41

17. Have you ever attended a non-public school (elementary or high) as a student?

No: 81.0% Yes: 19.0% NR: 0

18. Approximate salary level currently as Superintendent:

Mean: $24,310.34 Median: $25,000 NR: 0

19. How many certificated members are on your central office staff?

Mean: 11.6 Median: 8 NR: 3

20. How many (full) principals are in your system?

Mean: 19.7 Median: 14 NR: 0

21. Please check the organizations to which you belong currently:

LEA:	6.9%	AERA:	0.0%
LTA:	100.0%	ASCD:	3.4%
La. -ASCD:	6.9%	ATE:	0.0%
La. -Assn. of Tchr. Edrs.:	0.0%	AASA:	50.0%
		NASSP:	8.6%
La. Assn. of School Admin'rs.:	79.3%	NAESP:	1.7%
		Phi Delta Kappa:	43.1%
La. Ed. Res. Assn.:	3.4%	La. Assn. Schl. Supts.:	94.8%
Public Affairs Research Council:	5.6%		

22. Your church membership (if any):

Baptist:	38.6%	Methodist:	17.5%
Catholic:	31.6%	Presbyterian:	8.8%
Episcopalian:	3.5%	NR:	1

23. Other memberships:

American Legion:	32.8%	Masons:	25.9%
Kiwanis:	8.6%	Rotary:	24.1%
Knights of Columbus:	13.8%	VFW:	6.9%
Lions:	29.3%	Others:	24.1%

24. What do you regard as the number one problem facing education in Louisiana today: (Many gave more than one response.)

Financial support:	25	Discipline:	4
Public relations; lack of community support; loss of public confidence:	16	Teacher competency:	4
		Integration problems:	3
		Societal demands on schools:	3
Quality education:	8		

25. On what problem or area of work do you spend more of your time each week than any other? (Many gave more than one response.)

General administration:	32	Student problems:	9
Public relations:	17	Curriculum problems:	8
Budget (financial):	15	Personnel difficulties:	5

NR: 5

APPENDIX 2

DEGREES EARNED BY CURRENT LOUISIANA SUPERINTENDENTS

(? = Year not given)

	BACHELOR'S	MASTER'S	DOCTORAL
George Peabody		1950,1954,1955. (TOTAL:3)	
Georgetown	1954 (TOTAL:1)		
Grambling	1916		
Louisiana College	1949-2,1950,1951, 1952,1957,(?). (TOTAL:7)		
Louisiana State University	1937,193?,1939, 1947-2,1948, 1949-3,1950-2, 1954. (TOTAL:12)	1941,1943,1946, 1949-4,1950-2, 1951-3,1952, 1953-3,1955-2, 1956-4,1957, 1959-2,1960-2, (?),(?). (TOTAL:29)	
Louisiana Tech	1949-2,1950, 1951,1952,1955, 1957,1958. (TOTAL:8)	1925,1968. (TOTAL:2)	
Loyola	(?) (TOTAL:1)	(?) (TOTAL:1)	1967 (TOTAL:1)
McNeese		1967 (TOTAL:1)	
Mississippi College		1956,1957,1958. (TOTAL:3)	
Mississippi State University		1962 (TOTAL:1)	
Northeast	1953 (TOTAL:1)	1963,1964. (TOTAL:2)	1973 (TOTAL:1)
Northwest	1929,1936,1938-2, 1941,1947,1949, 1951-2,1956, 1957-2,1959. (TOTAL:13)	1958,1961, 1962-2,1963. (TOTAL:5)	1970-2 (TOTAL:2)

APPENDIX 2 (continued)

Ouachita Baptist	1949 (TOTAL:1)		
SLI	1950 (TOTAL:1)		
Southeast	1949,1951,1954, 1958. (TOTAL:4)		
Stephen Foster (Austin)		1959,1961. (TOTAL:2)	
Tulane		1963 (TOTAL:1)	
University of Alabama		1950 (TOTAL:1)	
University of Arkansas		1949,1952,1953, 1954-2. (TOTAL:5)	
University of Oklahoma			1973 (TOTAL:1)
USL	1934,1938,1942-2, 1948,1949,1950, 1952-2,1960. (TOTAL:10)		
University of Southern Mississippi	1940 (TOTAL:1)		1966,1973. (TOTAL:2)
University of Texas			1966 (TOTAL:1)
Xavier		1959 (TOTAL:1)	

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